

WEEKLY ANALYSIS

Issue Number – 434
(May 01 - 07, 2024)

U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE ISLAMIC EMIRATE



Weekly Analysis is one of the CSRS publications analyzing significant weekly political, social, economic, and security events in Afghanistan and the region. The prime motive behind this is to provide strategic insights and policy solutions to decision-making institutions and individuals in order to help them design better policies. Weekly Analysis is published in Pashto, Dari, English and Arabic languages.

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Center for Strategic and Regional Studies (CSRS)



U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE ISLAMIC EMIRATE

Introduction

The United States' foreign policy towards the countries of the world and the region has varied under different presidents. However, before World War I, some foreign policy scholars proposed theories regarding U.S. foreign policy that later evolved into the main schools of thought in American foreign policy. There are three major schools of thought in U.S. foreign policy that influence how the United States organizes its foreign affairs. These schools are as follows:

1. **Hamiltonism:** This school of thought posits that U.S. foreign policy should be based on American values rather than national interests, but these values should be accepted in other countries without war and intervention. The U.S. should first embody these values as a model and then voluntarily encourage their adoption in other countries. In essence, this school is value-driven rather than interest-driven and opposes intervention and war in other countries.
2. **Jacksonism:** This school is grounded in realism and advocates for the use of power in international politics. Unlike Hamiltonism, Jacksonism focuses on security in foreign policy and the pursuit of U.S. national interests. Jacksonism has three core principles:
 - Intervention in various countries and regions to achieve, maintain, and expand U.S. national interests.
 - Preserving and enhancing the position of the U.S. as a power in the international system and using power and force as needed in this regard.
 - Immediate response to threats against U.S. national interests.
3. **Wilsonism:** According to this school, the U.S. imposes American values on others through its foreign policy, including intervention and war. This school prioritizes enduring American values over transient national interests and organizes foreign policy to Americanize the world, imposing American values globally, and using force if necessary. According to this school, the U.S. sometimes engages in war and intervention to implement these values worldwide, even if such actions contradict national interests. When national interests and values conflict, values should be prioritized. The difference between Hamiltonism and Wilsonism is that Hamiltonism does not accept war and intervention to implement American values, whereas Wilsonism permits war and intervention for this purpose.



These three schools were established in the U.S. before World War I, but after World War II, U.S. presidents were influenced by these schools. If we practically apply these schools to U.S. presidents after the Cold War, it can be said that George H.W. Bush's foreign policy was influenced by Jacksonism and Wilsonism, Clinton's by Hamiltonism, George W. Bush's by Wilsonism, Obama's and Biden's by Hamiltonism and Jacksonism, and Trump's by Jacksonism.

The U.S. organizes its foreign policy towards the Islamic Emirate based on these political schools. Since the Islamic Emirate came to power again in 1400 (2021), there has been no significant change in U.S. foreign policy towards it. The U.S. strives to engage with the Islamic Emirate in a way that neither completely alienates it nor normalizes relations before securing its demands.

In this analysis, we first clarify the interaction between the Islamic Emirate and the U.S. and then explain the specific objectives of U.S. foreign policy towards the Islamic Emirate.

INTERACTION BETWEEN THE ISLAMIC EMIRATE AND THE U.S.

Interaction means that the United States engages in various dialogues with the Islamic Emirate, provides humanitarian aid, and discusses the future with it, but does not formally recognize it nor sever ties. This approach keeps multiple avenues for negotiation and understanding open, without either side imposing all its conditions on the other. With changing circumstances, the future of the relationship between the two countries may become clearer.

When the Islamic Emirate regained power in 2021, the U.S. found itself in a complex position. On one hand, it wanted to condemn the Islamic Emirate for human rights violations, ties with international terrorist groups, and the failure to form an inclusive government. On the other hand, it sought to engage in dialogue about Afghanistan's future, provide humanitarian aid, acknowledge economic progress, and encourage efforts to eliminate ISIS. To achieve the first goal, the United States imposed sanctions on the Islamic Emirate, froze Afghanistan's central bank assets, and restricted the travel of its leaders. To achieve the second goal, it allowed international aid agencies to operate, helped stabilize the Afghan currency by sending \$40 million weekly Through United Nations, organized Doha conferences, and secured a special budget from Congress for humanitarian aid.

Looking at the situation, the United States is at a crossroads in its relationship with the Islamic Emirate. It cannot completely sever ties, nor can it formally recognize it. Hence,



it has adopted a third approach—engaging with the Islamic Emirate in some areas while pressuring it to reform others.

In summary, the current U.S. foreign policy aims to remain engaged with the Islamic Emirate and negotiate about the future. This policy might be driven by the following reasons:

1. **Humanitarian and Economic Crisis:** The U.S. does not want to be blamed for the humanitarian and economic crises in Afghanistan, as it would damage its international standing. Other major powers might use this as propaganda to claim that the U.S. leaves crises in its wake wherever it goes. Thus, the U.S. aims to Engage with Islamic Emirates through United Nations and provide humanitarian and economic assistance to Afghanistan.
2. **Strength of the Islamic Emirate’s Political Power:** The United States has realized that, over nearly three years of governance, the Islamic Emirate has established complete political control, maintained security, and solidified its central authority. Therefore, the U.S. does not want to completely lose influence in this region and acknowledges that it needs to engage with the Islamic Emirate to pursue its objectives.
3. **Active Diplomacy and Relations with Regional and Neighboring Countries:** The Islamic Emirate has active diplomatic relations with Iran, China, Central Asia, Turkey, and Russia, and these relations are strengthening. If the U.S. were to completely sever ties with the Islamic Emirate, it would fall entirely into the hands of its adversaries, which the U.S. wants to avoid. Hence, the U.S. seeks to maintain engagement with the Islamic Emirate.
4. **Islamic Emirate’s Desire to Revive Relations with the West:** Another factor is that the Islamic Emirate wants to revive its relations with the West, especially the U.S., and is ready for dialogue in this regard. Given these conditions, the U.S. cannot avoid negotiations and dialogue, thus it is engaged in various talks with the Islamic Emirate.

SHOULD THE U.S. OFFICIALLY RECOGNIZE THE ISLAMIC EMIRATE?

The U.S. Council on Foreign Relations has posed this question to numerous university professors, researchers, and current politicians. The responses are divided: roughly half believe that relations with the Islamic Emirate should be established, some



are completely opposed, and others remain neutral, suggesting that the decision depends on the circumstances. Here is a summary of the three perspectives and their reasoning:

Viewpoint 1: The U.S. should engage with and officially recognize the Islamic Emirate.

Establishing relations and recognizing this government could address some of the security challenges faced by the United States. ISIS could threaten U.S. security interests in the region or create security problems. Therefore, by recognizing the Islamic Emirate, the U.S. can effectively combat ISIS through it.

Another issue is that the Islamic Emirate has taken effective measures to prevent drug cultivation and trafficking. If the Islamic Emirate realizes that its relations with the U.S. are not improving, it might resort to financing itself through drug taxation, which would be detrimental to U.S. interests.

Current U.S. engagement has somewhat restrained the Islamic Emirate. If the Islamic Emirate believes the West will never recognize it, human rights might face even greater challenges, and it could foster relationships with Al-Qaeda and other international networks, providing them sanctuary within its territory—an outcome not favorable to the U.S.

Another important factor is China's near recognition of the Islamic Emirate, as it has formally exchanged ambassadors with it. Russia and Iran also maintain very close relations. If the U.S. does not act to establish relations, this region might completely fall under its adversaries' influence, forming a solid bloc against U.S. interests.

Viewpoint 2: The U.S. should not establish any relations with the Islamic Emirate.

Experts in this group argue that the Islamic Emirate is a terrorist and ideological group, and formal recognition would strengthen it. Currently, without official recognition, they do not allow girls to study and operate in an authoritarian regime, excluding other Afghans from political participation. Thus, official recognition would likely increase human rights violations and bolster the authoritarian regime.

Viewpoint 3: The U.S. should recognize the Islamic Emirate under certain conditions.

Experts in this group suggest that the U.S. should recognize the Islamic Emirate once it forms an inclusive government, allows girls to study, and assures the U.S. of security threats. Recognition should follow these developments.



SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS THE ISLAMIC EMIRATE

War on Terrorism: The U.S. has consistently referred to Afghanistan as a breeding ground for terrorism and a threat to regional and domestic security. With the re-establishment of the Islamic Emirate, the U.S. closely monitors whether the country will once again become a haven for international groups. One of the groups the U.S. is combating is ISIS. One specific goal of U.S. foreign policy is to defeat ISIS in Afghanistan through the Islamic Emirate. This policy gained traction in 2022, when the U.S. placed a \$10 million bounty on ISIS leader Sanaullah Ghafari, who was accused of the August 26, 2021, Kabul airport attack that killed 30 Americans. In April 2023, the White House announced that the Taliban had killed this individual, severely weakening ISIS in Afghanistan. Therefore, the U.S. wants the Islamic Emirate to participate in the fight against terrorist groups like ISIS in Afghanistan.

Securing the Rights of Afghan Women and Girls: After the Islamic Emirate regained power, it suspended the constitution, leaving citizens' rights and obligations uncertain. According to a UN statement, Afghanistan is the only country where women and girls are barred from education. In December 2022, the Islamic Emirate banned women from working in domestic and international organizations and restricted women's and girls' travel without a male guardian. Thus, another specific goal of U.S. foreign policy is to secure the rights of Afghan women and girls through negotiations with the Islamic Emirate.

Humanitarian Aid: Another specific goal of U.S. foreign policy is to continue cooperation with the Islamic Emirate through humanitarian aid, delivered through several channels: international organizations like the World Food Program, the World Health Organization, and others; the United Nations (which allocated \$4.6 billion for Afghanistan's humanitarian crisis in 2023); international donors, including European, American, and Asian countries; and direct U.S. aid (according to SIGAR, the U.S. provided \$2.1 billion in aid to Afghanistan from the Islamic Emirate's re-establishment until the end of 2023). Thus, a key objective is to provide humanitarian aid to the Afghan people and avoid withdrawing from the country during a crisis.

Preventing Drug Trafficking: Another U.S. foreign policy objective towards the Islamic Emirate is to prevent the production and trafficking of drugs. The Islamic Emirate's leader has issued a decree banning drug cultivation and trafficking, significantly reducing opium and other drug revenues across the country. The U.S. views this as an achievement



for the Islamic Emirate and seeks further reforms in other areas to establish formal relations between the two countries.

Evacuating U.S. Allies from Afghanistan: Another objective of U.S. foreign policy is the evacuation of allies who collaborated with the U.S. during its 20-year mission.

Imposing Pressure and Restrictions on the Islamic Emirate to Meet Its Demands: Following the Islamic Emirate's resurgence, the U.S. froze Afghanistan's central bank assets and has not yet released them. It also imposed travel bans on the leaders of the Islamic Emirate and has not granted them a seat at the United Nations. Through these pressures, the U.S. aims to get the Islamic Emirate to meet some of its demands, primarily in the security sector.

CONCLUSION

There are three ways for the United States to engage with the Islamic Emirate:

Complete Isolation: Isolate the Islamic Emirate entirely and impose additional severe restrictions until they meet the U.S. demands.

Official Recognition: Recognize the Islamic Emirate officially and establish formal diplomatic relations with it.

Engagement without Recognition: Neither isolate it completely nor officially recognize it, but rather engage with it without formal recognition until the Islamic Emirate makes changes in its domestic policies.

So far, the United States has chosen the third path.

The specific objectives of U.S. foreign policy towards the Islamic Emirate include combating terrorism, fighting for the education and employment rights of girls, preventing drug trafficking, providing aid to prevent a humanitarian crisis, and evacuating U.S. allies from Afghanistan, and applying restrictions and pressure to make the Islamic Emirate meet its demands.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy Changes by the Islamic Emirate: The Islamic Emirate should make changes in its domestic policies, especially by allowing girls to attend schools and universities within the framework of Islamic Sharia. This could pave the way for their recognition and improve relations with the West, particularly the United States.



Lifting Sanctions by the U.S.: The United States should lift sanctions on Afghanistan, as they harm ordinary people. In particular, the frozen assets of the central bank should be released.

Accelerating Negotiations: The Islamic Emirate should strive to accelerate the negotiation process with the United States to resolve, as Afghans are facing difficulties in education, economic, and other social fields due to the lack of recognition.

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